General Managers and senior officers of all Zonal Railways participated to discuss various aspects of safety threadbare.

Various steps taken by Indian Railways, as well as continuous efforts being made, to reduce accidents and further improve safety, have been brought out in detail in the White Paper on Safety on Indian Railways presented to the Parliament on 7.4.2003.

Accreditation of technical and educational institutions

*289. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the state of our Technical and Educational Institutions, none of the 171 Institutes audited by them could fulfil the AICTE requirements necessary for accreditation; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) As per Section 10 (k) of the AICTE Act, 1987, AICTE grants approval for starting new technical institutions and introducting new courses/increasing intake following a prescribed procedure. Accreditation of programmes is different from approval process. It is a process of quality assurance. AICTE has set up the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) in terms of Section 10(u) of the Act. The 171 Institutions test-checked in audit and mentioned in the Report of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India (C&AG) were accorded approval by AICTE during the period 1997-98 to 2001-02. As per the NBA guidelines, the minimum eligibility criteria for a programme to be considered for accreditation is that, at least two batches must have passed out from the concerned programme. As such, most of the institutions that were established during the period of report i.e. 1997-98 to 2001-02 were not eligible for accreditation. The response for accreditation in the earlier years was poor due to lack of understanding and appreciation of the process involved. In order to encourage the institutions for getting their programmes accredited, AICTE has so far conducted 49 awareness workshops and 14 training workshops.